



DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

LEADING HEALTH, POPULATION AND FAMILY WELFARE STORIES OF THE DAY
Tuesday 20220405

Omicron variant

Omicron variant less severe than Delta for children younger than 5 years: Study (The Tribune: 20220405)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/health/omicron-variant-less-severe-than-delta-for-children-younger-than-5-years-study-383519>

The severe clinical outcomes ranged from a 16 per cent lower risk for emergency room visits to 85 per cent less risk for mechanical ventilation, the researchers said

Omicron variant less severe than Delta for children younger than 5 years: Study
Photo for representational purpose only. iStock

Children younger than five years who are infected with Omicron have less risk of severe health outcomes than those infected with the Delta variant of coronavirus, according to a study.

The research, published in the journal JAMA Pediatrics, is the first large-scale study to compare the health outcomes of coronavirus infection from Omicron and Delta in the age group which is not yet vaccinated.

The finding led by researchers at the Case Western Reserve University in the US show that the Omicron variant is 6-8 times more infectious than the Delta variant.

The severe clinical outcomes ranged from a 16 per cent lower risk for emergency room visits to 85 per cent less risk for mechanical ventilation, the researchers said.

About 1.8 per cent of children infected with Omicron were hospitalised, compared to 3.3 per cent with Delta, they said.

"The major conclusion to our research was that many more children were infected with Omicron when compared to Delta, but the children who are infected are not impacted as severely as were children infected with the Delta variant," said Pamela Davis, a research

professor at the Case Western Reserve School of Medicine. "However, because there are so many more children infected, our hospitals were affected over the winter months by an influx of young children," Davis said.

The team analysed the electronic health records of more than 651,640 children in the US, including over 22,772 children infected with the Omicron variant and more than 66,000 children infected with Delta.

The study also compared the records of more than 10,000 children immediately before the detection of Omicron in the US, but when Delta was still predominant.

The researchers noted that children younger than five years are not yet eligible for COVID-19 vaccines and have a low rate of previous SARS-CoV-2 infections, which also limits their pre-existing immunity.

They examined clinical health outcomes for pediatric patients during a 14-day window following SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Among the factors they reviewed were: emergency room visits, hospitalisations, ICU admissions and mechanical ventilation use.

Analysing the demographic data, the researchers found that children infected with Omicron were on average younger -- 1.5 years of age versus 1.7 years -- and had fewer comorbidities.

Rong Xu, from Case Western Reserve School of Medicine, noted that Omicron is less severe than Delta, however, the reduction of the severity range in clinical outcomes is only 16 to 85 per cent.

"Furthermore, since so many un-vaccinated children were infected, the long-term effects of COVID-19 infections on the brain, heart, immune systems and other organs of children remains unknown and worrisome," Xu added.

Social Problem

More suicides than murders

Society sensitised to mental ills key to addressing problem (The Tribune: 20220405)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/editorials/more-suicides-than-murders-383578>

There is a whole lot of government paraphernalia — law enforcement agencies as well as prisons — and the judiciary to deter people from committing heinous crimes such as murder. But when compared with the fact that in India, people are five times more likely to take their

own life than be murdered, the abysmally disproportionate resources to deal with this huge burden reflect a lack of empathy towards the problem whose genesis lies in mental health. The murder vs suicide rates are similar globally, except in conflict zones or the drug mafia-ridden Latin America.

However, in a heart-warming trend, attention is today increasingly being paid to suicide statistics that disturbingly point to an uptick in all groups — from young students to the elderly, from those in stress-prone difficult duties like the military and paramilitary forces to the poorly paid and those without gainful employment. India's first commendable step towards the recognition of the government's responsibility of providing medical care and rehabilitation to persons with suicidal tendencies was the decriminalisation of suicide through the Mental Healthcare Act 2017. Beginning with the discontinuance of giving electric shocks to the mentally challenged, the Act aims to transform mental healthcare.

But the path to this ambitious goal has many hurdles. The social stigma attached to the underlying psychiatric issues, such as depression and substance abuse, remains painstakingly high and prevents the patients from taking medical care. Suicides in India rose to an all-time high of over 1.5 lakh in 2020, as per the National Crime Records Bureau. Sadly, the number of psychiatrists and counsellors as well as mental health facilities to cater to this patient load remains acutely insufficient. While experts and celebrities are opening up about various mental disorders, leading to increased public perception that they be treated on a par with physical ailments, a lot more needs to be done to spread awareness. A society sensitised towards the mentally afflicted persons can help prevent suicides.

India's Covid deaths per million among lowest, claims govt US and Brazil reported 2,920 and 3,092 deaths per million, India 374(The Tribune: 20220405)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/indias-covid-deaths-per-million-among-lowest-claims-govt-381889>

The government on Tuesday junked recent reports of excess Covid-19 deaths in India saying these reports mostly relied on unvalidated methodologies. In a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Health Bharati Pawar said as of March 24, the states and UTs had reported 5,16,672 Covid deaths.

Also read: Covid deaths in India 8 times higher than reported, claims Lancet study

“As per the data available with WHO, India has one of the lowest deaths per million (374), much lower than US (2,920), Brazil (3,092), Russia (2,506) and Mexico (2,498),” the ministry said. The government said that certain reports had speculated excess deaths higher than the official number of fatalities.

“These reports have mostly relied on unvalidated methodologies, or the data sources used to derive ‘estimates’ are not reliable. In most of these studies results have been obtained using

mathematical modelling techniques from a limited sample of small sub-population subgroups which is extrapolated to the entire country,” Pawar said.

She said India has a robust Civil Registration System (CRS) and Sample Registration System (SRS) which predates the pandemic and covers all states/UTs. The registration of deaths in the country is done under the Registration of Births and Deaths Act by functionaries appointed by the state governments.

Ayurveda alert

Ayurveda alert: Beat the summer heat with vetiver or khus roots

"These roots are extremely cooling, and aromatic too," Ayurvedic practitioner Dr Rekha Radhamony said on Instagram (The Indian Express:20220405)

<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/summer-cooling-khus-vetiver-roots-drinking-water-hydration-odour-7852066/>

vetiver khus Stay hydrated this summer with this cooling remedy (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Summertime can be extremely harsh on one's health and lead to numerous body and skin issues. While one of the best ways to beat the summer heat is to keep the body hydrated, what if we tell you about a miracle ingredient to add to the water to not only help the body cool down but also enhance digestion?

All you need is a handful of vetiver or khus roots.

Also Read | Beat the summer heat with these effective ayurvedic tips

Ayurvedic practitioner Dr Rekha Radhamony explained the many benefits of vetiver in a detailed video on Instagram. Check it out below.

“These roots are extremely cooling, and aromatic too,” explained Dr Radhamony in the video.

Newborn jaundice:

Newborn jaundice: From causes to risk factors, all you need to know (The Indian Express:20220405)

<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/newborn-jaundice-condition-babies-7813922/>

Newborn jaundice: From causes to risk factors, all you need to know

Almost 80 per cent of babies born prematurely and more than 60 per cent of term babies will have jaundice. Of these, 10 per cent need ‘phototherapy’ which is a form of treatment with special lights, said Dr Shashidhar Vishwanath, lead consultant in neonatology and paediatrics

SSG, SSG hospital, child swap at ssg hospital, Vadodara Police, Vadodara, Gujarat, Gujarat news, vadodara news, Indian express news, Indian expressJaundice can affect newborns (Source: Pixabay)

Newborn jaundice, common in infants, is a condition in which the skin and the white of the eyes turn yellow. However, it is different from the jaundice that affects adults, as both of them have very different causes and treatments. “Almost 80 per cent of babies born prematurely, and more than 60 per cent of term babies get jaundice. Of these, 10 per cent need ‘phototherapy’ which is a form of treatment with special lights,” said Dr Shashidhar Vishwanath, lead consultant in neonatology and paediatrics, SPARSH Hospital for Women and Children.

The majority of jaundice in the newborn period is physiological, which means that it is a part of the normal body process. It is further divided into pathological jaundice, or severe neonatal jaundice.

What causes jaundice?

Bilirubin, the jaundice pigment, is derived from the breakdown of red blood cells. All babies are born with more red blood cells as compared to adults. These red blood cells are broken down after birth, leading to the accumulation of bilirubin in the blood. The liver processes this bilirubin and turns it into a non-toxic form that is removed from the body through urine and stool. However, if this pigment accumulates beyond a certain level, it can cause problems, Dr Vishwanath said.

Also Read |‘Covid may have reversed the gains made in state’s maternal and newborn health’
The most severe is a condition called ‘kernicterus’ when the pigment spreads to the brain and causes various effects. Severe jaundice can cause the baby to become tired, sleepy, lethargic, and refuse feed which can lead to dehydration. In severe cases, they can have altered posture, seizures, and become moribund. “This condition, fortunately, is no longer very common due to improved newborn care and administration of vitamin K,” said Dr Vishwanath.

breastfeeding Breastfeeding failure may also lead to newborn jaundice (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock))

Risk factors

Babies who are born premature, have poor feeding, severe infection (sepsis), born to diabetic mothers, and those who have difficult labour with bruising are at an increased risk of jaundice. Excessive bilirubin production, because of rapid breakdown of red blood cells (called hemolytic jaundice), could be due to Rh, ABO and minor blood group incompatibility between the mother's and the baby's red blood cells.

Additionally, certain genetic disorders (Crigler Najjar, UGT1A1 mutation, Gilbert's syndrome etc) reduces the liver's ability to metabolise or break down bilirubin. Certain enzyme defects like G6PD deficiency also cause excessive jaundice. One of the common types is the breastfeeding failure jaundice that occurs due to lactation failure in the first week of life due to insufficient intake, weight loss and significant dehydration in the baby. Frequent breastfeeding with lactational support is usually the line of treatment recommended.

Typically, jaundice peaks on day 3 to 5 of life. Though visual inspection of the skin colour is useful, it is not always accurate. "We rely on measurement of bilirubin level in blood. Most babies born in a hospital will have a visual inspection of skin along with bilirubin checks on day 3 of life (after 48 hours of life). There are guidelines to help determine which babies need treatment and those who can be managed without," he explained.

Prevention and care

Prevention of severe jaundice in healthy babies is important. This involves three general principles –

1. Universal systematic assessment before discharge – Before discharge, total bilirubin is measured and checked to see if treatment is required. Additionally, it is crucial to provide parental counselling for them to understand the warning signs of severe jaundice.
2. Close follow up – Babies need to be followed up closely in the first two weeks to assess for signs of jaundice, weight gain and general activity.
3. Prompt intervention when indicated – This includes admission to hospital, feeding support and phototherapy.

The basic test to assess jaundice is serum bilirubin. If this level is raised, then one needs to find out the reason depending on the clinical history. Checking the mother's blood group, Rh type and presence of any antibody, checking hematocrit (an estimate of the red blood cell concentration), Coombs' test (detects if RBCs are being broken down) help.

Also Read |Gynaecologists share essential dos and don'ts for breastfeeding mothers
Jaundice in newborns is treated by using a special type of ultraviolet light which converts the jaundice pigment to a water soluble form that is then removed from the body. Phototherapy is simple, safe and effective in treating jaundice. It causes no long-term problems for the baby, Dr Vishwanath said.

Nutritional supplements

The increase in consumption of nutritional supplements (and their efficacy) in the Covid-19 pandemic

As a result of the growing demand, several 'made in India' nutritional supplements ranging from tasty gummies and strips to powders, blends and teas became popular in the country (The Indian Express:20220405)

<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/nutritional-supplements-covid-19-pandemic-meaning-herbs-dietary-benefits-health-7816861/>

Consumers sought additional protections from viral infection and disease based on the assumption that supplement products may offer health benefits. (Source: Pexels)

Since the onset of the pandemic, there has been an increased shift towards health and nutrition, and rightfully so. With stronger immunity and greater health, it becomes easier to ward off a host of illnesses and recover faster. While consuming healthy vegetables and fruits is essential, many also turned attention to nutritional supplements to meet their body's nutrition requirements.

“In the grips of a devastating global pandemic, consumers sought additional protections from viral infection and disease based on the assumption that supplement products may offer health benefits or ‘immune-boosting’ effects if consumed,” noted a study, Dietary supplements and nutraceuticals market growth during the coronavirus pandemic – Implications for consumers and regulatory oversight.

A recent survey by consultancy firm EY India also highlighted that Indian consumers are now willing to spend more on fitness, health, and nutrition with the Covid-19 creating “the biggest seismic shift” taking health and immunity to the center stage.

ALSO READ |Gummies: Are these colourful, tasty dietary supplements beneficial for health? Rise of nutritional supplements market in India

As a result of the growing demand, several ‘made in India’ nutritional supplements ranging from tasty gummies and strips to powders, blends, and teas became popular in the country.

“The pandemic surely increased the consumption of supplements globally as people started to be more self-aware about keeping themselves and their families healthy and safe from various ailments and lifestyle diseases,” said Rakshit Mehta, CEO, NanoVeda – a brand combining nanotechnology and Ayurveda to create dissolvable strips of nutritional supplements. He shared that NanoVeda Immune Strips, Iron Strips, Sleep Strips, Ashwagandha and Curcumin Strips were some of the favourites during the pandemic.

A similar upward trend was observed by CosMix – which makes supplements using superfood blends and adaptogens, both of which target particular problems. “People became more aware of what’s good for them and their overall well-being. Health took priority like never before,

especially when it came to the gut. Luckily, we were already talking about its importance and had the solution ready,” said Vibha Harish, founder, CosMix.

What are nutritional supplements?

Before we delve deeper, let’s understand more about what nutritional supplements exactly are. According to Vidhi Dhingra, senior clinical dietician, vHealth by Aetna, nutritional supplements are products “added to the diet when one is unable to meet the requirements of the body. It usually contains one or more dietary ingredients which help in meeting the daily recommended dietary requirements needed. Essential nutritional supplements include vitamins, minerals, proteins, fat, water and carbohydrates.”

Agreed Anagha P A, clinical dietitian, Manipal Hospital, “Some nutritional supplements can be taken generally for overall well-being. Some are exclusively used in therapeutic conditions where the supplements include whey protein, hydrolyzed forms of protein, rich in immuno nutrients etc.”

How effective are nutritional supplements?

Experts believe when consumed at the right time and in the right quantity, supplements can help increase overall health and performance.

“They also help in managing and preventing certain health conditions. Calcium and Vitamin D supplements are effective for strengthening bones, folic acid supplements have successfully been used to reduce the risk of certain birth defects, fish oil is good for heart and brain health, protein supplements are known to build muscles and expedite recovery. Vitamin C supplements boost immunity and have widely been prescribed by doctors during the COVID-19 pandemic as well,” explained Aman Puri, founder, Steadfast Nutrition.

Daily Covid cases

Daily Covid cases dip below 1,000 for first time in 2 years (The Indian Express:20220405)

<https://epaper.hindustantimes.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=542d1f40ca&imageview=0>

India recorded fewer than 1,000 new cases of Covid-19 for the first time in 715 days, according to data released by states, days after the country rolled back the last vestiges of its pandemic-triggered curbs.

Data released by states on Sunday, collated by HT, showed that there were 865 new cases across the country, the lowest since April 17, 2020, when there were a little over 900 cases. In terms of weekly averages, the number of new cases till Sunday was the lowest since April 19, 2020.

In terms of active cases, the number on Sunday — a little over 10,000 — was the lowest since April 15, 2020.

The similarities between then and now are limited to new and active cases. India is now carrying out close to 18 times the number of tests every day than it did two years ago, when tests were expensive and capacity was limited. On April 19, 2020, when the cases on average were this low, the number of tests conducted was a little under 30,000. On Sunday, this number was 532,000.

Therefore, the test positivity ratio – a crucial barometer for how widespread an outbreak really is irrespective of testing fluctuations – is merely 0.2% now, compared to 3.9% then.

Experts said the drop is an important milestone but the country should not lower its guard.

“The number of cases falling below the 1,000 mark is definitely an important feat for India but this is not the time to lower our guard. Mask mandate needs to be followed and crowding at public places need to be monitored,” said former president of the Indian Medical Association Dr JA Jayalal. P7

WHO

A pause to reflect: On WHO decision to recommend a pause in the supply of Covaxin (The Hindu:20220405)

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-pause-to-reflect-on-who-decision-to-recommend-a-pause-in-the-supply-of-covaxin/article65289681.ece>

The Government and Bharat Biotech should strive for better communication on vaccine safety. The World Health Organization's (WHO) decision to recommend a pause in the supply of Covaxin for export is worrying. This follows an inspection of the company's production facilities between March 14 and 22 that found “deficiencies” in the process to ensure that the vaccine produced is consistently suitable for use. Bharat Biotech, the makers of Covaxin, has said it is committed to addressing these ‘Good Manufacturing Process deficiencies’ and developing a “corrective and preventive” action plan that it will submit to the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI). WHO has told countries that for now they should “consider” alternative vaccines but it has also said that the data available with it suggest that Covaxin is safe and effective. The details of these lacunae are not public but Bharat Biotech has said that sophisticated equipment needed to “enhance the process stringency” were unavailable during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not the first time that Bharat Biotech has tangled with WHO. The global body sought information at least nine times from the Hyderabad company before approving it to be a global supplier of Covaxin. In March 2021, the Brazilian health regulator, Anvisa, pointed to several problems with Bharat Biotech's manufacturing plant ahead of an agreement by the company to sell 20 million doses of the vaccine to Brazil. This deal was

ultimately terminated, but there has never been clear communication either by Bharat Biotech or the DCGI on the concerns raised by the Brazilian health body.

While India is no stranger to making and supplying billions of vaccine doses, it has historically done so with the benefit of time. The pandemic saw pulling out all the stops and the balance between safety and speed tilting towards the latter by both drug regulators, under pressure from their governments, and vaccine manufacturers, for whom gargantuan demand promised a financial windfall. Other companies, internationally too, have made mistakes in supply. AstraZeneca mistakenly supplied some volunteers who were being tested with the Oxford vaccine with half the required dose that led to surprising results. This was not disclosed until much after the trial results were made public and experts openly questioned the efficacy results. The defining characteristic of a vaccine is its safety profile and its acceptability is premised on its makers and the regulators being transparent about it at all times. Both the Government and Bharat Biotech should strive for better public communication on these fronts.

mRNA vaccine

Biological E. to receive mRNA vaccine tech from WHO (The Hindu:20220405)

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/biological-e-to-receive-mrna-vaccine-tech-from-who/article65290270.ece>

Hub has potential to expand manufacturing capacity for other products beyond Covid vaccines. Vaccine maker Biological E. has been selected to receive mRNA technology from the World Health Organization technology transfer hub.

After examining a number of proposals from India, the WHO's Advisory Committee on Vaccine Product Development has selected Biological E. as a recipient, the Hyderabad-based firm said on Monday.

Fresh COVID-19 cases

Fresh COVID-19 cases drop below 1,000, first since April 2020(The Hindu:20220405)

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/fresh-covid-19-cases-drop-below-1000-first-since-april-2020/article65289327.ece>

Active caseload declines to 12,597 and they constitute about 0.03% of the number of positive cases

Daily new cases in the country slipped to below 1,000, the first time it touched three digits since April 2020, according to figures from the Health Ministry. The active caseload declined to 12,597 and they constitute about 0.03% of the number of positive cases.

The weekly positive rate, a more consistent indicator of the trend in coronavirus cases, has only dipped to 0.22%. Thirteen new deaths pushed the

SARS-CoV-2 variant

WHO records new recombinant SARS-CoV-2 variant (The Hindu:20220405)

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/who-records-new-recombinant-sars-cov-2-variant/article65284952.ece>

XE recombinant reported in the U.K.; a recombinant variant occurs when an individual is infected with two or more variants at the same time.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has flagged the emergence of a new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the XE recombinant, in the United Kingdom, and with a possibly higher rate of transmission.

Population

99pc global population breathe air that exceeds quality limits: WHO 5 hours ago (New Kerala:20220405)

Almost the entire global population (99 per cent) breathes air that exceeds air quality limits, and threatens their health, according to a report-> View it--> <https://www.newkerala.com/news/2022/49828.htm>

Physical Fitness

Exercise could help reduce severity of serious cancer complication, finds study (New Kerala:20220405) /

Researchers have identified yet another benefit of keeping up the exercise routine. A recent study has found that exercising prior-> View it--> <https://www.newkerala.com/news/2022/49720.htm>

New CRISPR technique

New CRISPR technique in human blood to help find cure for HIV 13 hours ago New Kerala:20220405)

US scientists are using new advances in CRISPR gene-editing technology to uncover new biology that could lead to long-lasting treatments and new the-> View it--> <https://www.newkerala.com/news/2022/49618.htm>

COVID-19 pandemic

New study sheds light on how people gained weight during COVID-19 pandemic (New Kerala:20220405)

13 hours ago / ANI Washington, April 4: A new study has found that more people weighed in as obese during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic than the previous year.->-> View it-> <https://www.newkerala.com/news/2022/49605.htm>

भास्कर खास • केंद्र सरकार ने कोविड की जांचों के लिए फंड देने से इनकार किया अब चिकित्सा विभाग ने मान लिया कोरोना 'खत्म' इमरजेंसी में लगे 300 से अधिक कर्मचारी हटाए

संदीप शर्मा | जयपुर

जनता के साथ-साथ अब चिकित्सा विभाग ने भी मान लिया है कि प्रदेश से कोरोना खत्म हो गया है। चिकित्सा विभाग ने सभी सरकारी अस्पतालों में इमरजेंसी में कोविड जांच के लिए लगाए गए 300 से अधिक कर्मचारियों को हटाने के आदेश जारी किए हैं। इसका कारण केंद्र सरकार का आदेश है। आदेश में केंद्र ने कहा कि इमरजेंसी रेस्पॉंस एंड हेल्थ सिस्टम पैकेज (कोविड के दौरान मिलता था) के तहत नए वित्तीय वर्ष में फंड नहीं मिलेगा। ऐसे में कोविड जांच में लगाए गए लैब टेक्नीशियन, रिसर्च असिस्टेंट और डाटा एंट्री ऑपरेटर हटाए जा रहे हैं। अब उन्हीं जगह आरटीपीसीआर टेस्ट होगा जहां राज्य स्तर पर सुविधाएं और स्टाफ मौजूद है। जयपुर में ही 50 लैब टेक्नीशियन और 74 डाटा एंट्री ऑपरेटर और तीन रिसर्च असिस्टेंट थे। ऐसे में चौथी लहर आई तो परेशानी तय है।

प्रदेश में कोरोना के कम होने के बाद सैंपलिंग भी नहीं के बराबर हो रही है



90% तक कम हुई है। बड़ी बात यह कि ओमिक्रॉन का पता लगाने वाला टेस्ट 9000 रु. का पड़ रहा था। हर दिन 200 टेस्ट हो रहे थे। ऐसे में सरकार के 18 लाख रुपए लग रहे थे।

जहां जांच नहीं हो सकेगी, वहां से सैंपल मेडिकल कॉलेज जाएंगे

राजस्थान में अभी कोविड जांच की इतनी अधिक जरूरत नहीं है और जिन जगहों पर जांच नहीं हो सकेगी, वहां से सैंपल सम्बन्धित मेडिकल कॉलेज को भेजे जाएंगे। केंद्र सरकार की ओर से इनकार करने के कारण ऐसा किया गया है। फिलहाल, किसी भी तरह का काम प्रभावित नहीं होगा। ओमिक्रॉन की टेस्टिंग भी कम की गई है क्योंकि कोविड केस काफी कम है।

वैभव गालरिया, चिकित्सा शिक्षा सचिव, राजस्थान सरकार

